THE TWIN UMBRELLAS

BY MARJORIE WILSON

ILLUSTRATED IN COLOUR AND BLACK-AND-WHITE BY

MARY BALL

THE TWIN UMBRELLAS were two super-umbrellas exactly alike. The story tells how one of them lived with a Duke in London, and the other with a gentleman in the country; how they were both lost; the strange experiences one of them had at the Lost Property Office; and the curious way in which each came back at last to its proper owner.

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THE TWIN UMBRELLAS

MR. TRAVERS LEAVES THE EXQUISITE UMBRELLA IN A TELEPHONE BOX

THE TWIN UMBRELLAS

BY

MARJORIE WILSON

Author of "Klipper Klopper"
"Children's Rhymes of Travel" etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY MARY BALL

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TO

ROGER L. SCAIFE

TO REMIND HIM OF
HIS EXPERIENCES WITH
A BRITISH UMBRELLA

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CHAPTER 1

ENTER THE EXQUISITE UMBRELLA

THE Exquisite Umbrella had started life in St. James's, where, over the door of his first home, a notice read :

UMBRELLA MAKERS TO
HIS MAJESTY THE KING

Thus he was no common umbrella, but a dandy one, and his slim black silk coat, when buttoned, fitted to perfection against his well-made ribs.

It was hard, therefore, to have spent so much of his time, after he had once been launched on the world, away from his comfortable home. It is true he had been rescued many times, partly because a little tape with

his master's name, " E. G. Travers," and the address, was fixed upon him somewhere, but " Oh, my dear," he said one day to a short blue lady umbrella standing next to him in the hall, " the places I have been in ! The discomfort, and sometimes the dust. Now you are lucky. Your mistress just puts her hand through your leather collar, and there you swing on her arm, and stay with her everywhere she goes. While my master, much as I love him, . . ." Words began to fail.

" Ah, you must forgive him "—the little blue silk umbrella with her skirts spread about her tried to be philosophical. " He is rather young, and my mistress, his mother, has lived longer in the world than he has, and has learned to take more care of her less valuable possessions. . . ."

" Less valuable indeed ! Do you forget that I am gold-mounted with a pencil hidden in my handle, and that a twin brother of mine, who is my exact double in every way, was bought by the Duke of Bing Bong ? "

" And where is your brother now, I won-

der? Do you think that Dukes are above losing umbrellas? What *I* think is that we should all be very thankful that you have come back so many times, if indeed they are many. Only quite a few when you come to count them, I expect."

"Well, to start with there was the public telephone box where my master left me with one of his gloves, luckily remembering ten minutes afterwards, and coming back to fetch me just in time. He was agitated that day. It was towards Christmas time, and he telephoned about a Christmas present for somebody that had not arrived. *I* believe it was for that person who came here one night in a white dress, because . . ."

"Never mind what he telephoned about. Where else have you been? That only makes one."

"Twice I have been left in the rack of the railway train between here and London. Once in a tobacconist's in the Haymarket; once at a theatre in the afternoon. Twice at his Club in Piccadilly. Three times at Smaridge's (the

porter there knows me well now). Once at a post office, a barber's, and many times at friends' houses. It is strange, now I come to think of it, that I have never yet been taken to Scotland Yard, or rather to the Lost Property Office (because the hotel for umbrellas has been moved from Scotland Yard). I should like to spend a few nights in that hotel. It would interest me to see what it is like. Very modern, they say. All the latest conveniences."

"Doubtless you will, if I know your master," the little umbrella laughed. "Who knows what may happen when the rain comes again? These sunny days are restful, of course, but dull, and life seems at a standstill."

As she spoke, on the other side of the hall laughter sounded, and from an open garden-door two people emerged. One was a tall young man dressed in tennis clothes. He walked with a swinging gait, and had a lazy, laughing look in a pair of very blue eyes, and written large all over him was the fact that here was a man who left umbrellas in places.

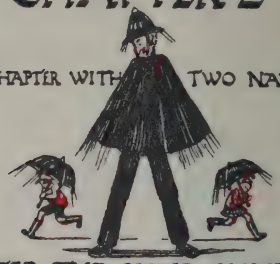
His companion was a slim girl, with hair like the gold of the mount on a St. James's stick.

"Is that the one who makes him leave things in telephone boxes?" the blue umbrella whispered to her friend.

"Yes, that is the lady," he answered, "and of course there is something about her . . . something . . ."

"You are quite right. There is; I thought so, too," the blue umbrella answered

CHAPTER 2



RAIN. & ENTER THE SUPER SUPER UMBRELLA

THE rain came down in streams, and buckets, and deluges, for the trap-door in the heavens, which is sometimes closed so that man may behold the sun, was open wide, and earth became wetter and wetter every time she went round.

The country swallowed up gallons and gallons ; the green grass bathed, and the great trees dipped their feet in puddles, while the ten thousand little leaves on each one shone and dripped, and birds tucked hidden in nests listening to the boom of the rain beating outside their tiny brown doors.

London received the rain, too. Drops jumped and danced about the polished streets,

and streamed from policemen's helmets and waterproof cloaks. Groups of them joining hands played at being rivers in the gutters. Taxi-cabs were busy, and umbrellas were overworking.

In a high, much be-windowed, many-shuttered, be-whiskered house (I say "be-whiskered" because two bunchy trees of equal size stood one on each side of the stone erection, reminding one of chop whiskers on a face) . . . well, as I began, in this high, be-windowed, be-shuttered, be-whiskered house, the Duke of Bing Bong stood by a closed window which looked across Hyde Park, and beheld the weather.

Raindrops ran helter-skelter down his panes like fairy tears. Singly they went, and in twos. Then arm in arm in rows they winked at him, even putting out cheeky wee tongues and scuttering out of sight, as though he were no Duke at all.

Now, to look at, the Duke, although actually *being* a Duke, was really like one. His nose had distinctly been made for one,

and had already (though he was not more than about forty-five, or sixty) advanced towards his chin in an aristocratic bend, while his chin had begun an uphill climb. Also, his clothes being ducal too, he was not very keen to go out in such teeming rain, and bespoil himself.

"But you have an umbrella, dear," his wife reminded him when he said, "*What* a day!" instead of remarking, "*What* weather!" as he had just now.

Yes, he had an umbrella. That was just it. In fact, that umbrella was one of the dark secrets of the Duke's life which he wore next his heart. He had an umbrella, a super-super umbrella, bought in a moment when he had felt the shopman's will was stronger than his own. It was gold-mounted, with a knob on the top of the crooked handle, which knob, when pressed and then pulled out, was discovered to be a gold-mounted pencil which really wrote. So, of course, the umbrella was too good to be used on wet days, and ever since the Duke had bought it, it had been

propped in an umbrella-stand in the ducal hall, the Duke giving it a passing nod day by day, while his pulse quickened, and his eyes grew brighter.

And now it had come to this. He had left his own ordinary umbrella, made for rain, in a taxi-cab, and he, to-day at one o'clock, was expecting to give a friend of his lunch at Smaridge's in Piccadilly.

Of course he could send for a taxi, or have his car brought round, but the Duke of Bing Bong liked exercise, and made a habit of walking across the Park in all weathers to his Club, or to Smaridge's.

Well, perhaps to-day, for once he had better just drive. . . .

What? Be beaten by an umbrella? No. After all, NO.

So he said good-bye to his wife, who remarked after kissing him, "*What* weather!" and he answered, "By jove, yes, *what* a day!" Then he went into the hall, and, with a beating heart, took his super-super umbrella bravely into his right hand, and stepped forth

with it into the battle of rain-drops that fell like tiny cannon balls on to its protecting tent.

And the super-super umbrella felt that life had at last begun for him, and was happy.

THE DUKE IN THE RAIN

CHAPTER 3

THE PLOT LOOKS AS THOUGH IT MIGHT SOON BEGIN TO THICKEN

THE porter who stood in uniform at the door of Smaridge's Hotel said, "Good morning, Your Grace. *What* weather, Your Grace." And His Grace said, "Yes, *what* a day, Pinker," and went to the cloakroom to leave the things that gentlemen take off in cloakrooms, such as coats and hats and umbrellas.

Now an extraordinary thing—an unforeseen, and unheard-of-before thing had, a few moments ago, happened to the cloakroom attendant. He had been taken ill! Who ever heard before of a cloakroom attendant being taken ill—on duty, too? What could he have been thinking of?

Anyway, this was a fact, and the Duke actually hung up his own hat and coat, and placed his umbrella in a stand, for that purpose, with his own hands, and departed thence to an immense lounge, where he found his friend sitting at a table doing the cross-word puzzle in the *Morning Post*.

Meanwhile down in the country sixteen miles away, Mr. Travers stood at the study telephone. The door was open, and the umbrellas in the hall could hear what he was saying: "What a good idea. Splendid! Yes, I'd love to come. It's too wet to do anything in the country. I'll come straight to the theatre after lunch here—motor up, in half an hour. Yes, good-bye."

"That means an outing for me," the St. James's umbrella remarked. "I wonder what adventures I am in for to-day?"

But the little blue umbrella was rather silent. "I hope you will come back safely," was all she said.

About half an hour later a large brown car was drawn up at the front door, and Mr.

Travers went up to his little waiting servant and lifted him from his stand.

"Drive to the Criterion Theatre," he told the chauffeur, and a moment later he climbed inside the car, which started down the wet and splashing drive in the pouring rain, while the Exquisite Umbrella leaned luxuriously against the grey cushioned seats.

On the way to London, Mr. Travers remembered that as his mother had not been in to luncheon he had not told her of his plans, so he ordered the chauffeur to stop at the Charing Cross Post Office. He jumped out when they reached it, and sent his mother a telegram.

So far everything had gone well. He was up to time; he was going to enjoy a play at a theatre, and—the sky actually seemed to be brightening, and the rain becoming less. In fact, as he came out once more from the post office, he noticed overhead a gleam something like far-off sunshine hovering behind the greyness.

Nevertheless, these signs in the skies did not make him remember his umbrella.

Springing into the car, which started off once more, he settled down to watch the moving skies until he reached the theatre, when the far-off sunshine really did break through that blanket of cloud, and laugh down on the sopping streets.

But *still* he did not remember his umbrella.

He had left it on the counter of the Charing Cross Post Office.

. . . . . .

Pinker, the hotel porter, on his way back from his lunch downstairs, paused a moment to inquire for the cloakroom official. He was better, but had been sent home for the rest of the day. Perhaps Pinker would be so good as to help a bit with the cloakroom as well as with the door.

Now, as you can see for yourself, Pinker's was as unselfish a life as any one could wish to lead, for he spent it opening doors for other people—the great hotel door in particular, and taxi doors as well. Also he was quite good at opening his hand for tips (and closing it afterwards).

So Pinker, trained to unselfishness, helped the temporary cloakroom attendant, who was moved from other duties in the hotel for the time being.

It was when Pinker was showing the new man his way about that he caught sight of the Duke of Bing Bong's umbrella.

Now, of course, as the Duke had never brought his umbrella to Smaridge's before, Pinker was positively certain that it must belong to Mr. Travers. And yet to-day he had not seen Mr. Travers come in, although he, Pinker, had been at the door all the morning. Perhaps he had arrived for lunch while Pinker had been at his own beefsteak. Now, as Mr. Travers was known to all the officials at Smaridge's, Pinker sent the page to find out, and also himself asked the man who had been on duty while he had been away, if Mr. Travers had been seen. No, he had not been in that day.

He must, then, have come yesterday, and had left his umbrella then. Pinker would put it away in safety for him as he had done

PINKER HIDES THE DUKE'S UMBRELLA

before. It was a valuable umbrella, and he would hide it until Mr. Travers either came for it or rang up about it telling him what to do. These charwomen, and people like that coming in at night and the early morning—well, you never knew. And, besides, Pinker's hand always closed upon pieces of silver each time he found gentlemen's missing property.

So Pinker, in a safe hiding-place he knew of, deposited the super-super umbrella belonging to the Duke of Bing Bong.

CHAPTER 4

THE DUKE OF BING BONG TAKES A WALK
&
TWO PEOPLE TAKE SOME-ONE ELSES UMBRELLA

MEANWHILE, high over the Park, outside the sun had arrived, gilding the grass and trees with light, like the beauty on a smiling face after a storm of temper. Nurses with prams sprang up from nowhere at all. People in the streets coming out from shops and restaurants gazed up at the sky and looked happy, and London, on the whole, cheered up.

Seated smoking a cigar in the lounge with his friend after lunch, the Duke of Bing Bong discussed a " Sunshine Home " he was building amongst green meadows for poor children, for the Duke believed in fresh air for people, and sunshine, and even, in reason,

rain, and he worked much harder over these things than an office boy running for a taxi-cab, though people are not likely to believe such an idea is possible about a Duke (who looked like one, too !).

And then his friend suddenly said, " Why, the rain has stopped. Sun's out. How about a walk ? "

To which idea His Grace agreed.

So out they went, and, talking intently, walked for miles and miles through London's great gardens—Hyde Park, and even Kensington Gardens, to the Round Pond where little children pretend they are grown-up men racing yachts, and where grown-up men become children, and where dogs and children grow as thick as wild roses in a hedge.

But the Duke gave not a thought to his umbrella. And, indeed, why should he? The sun was shining, and why should any normal man remember an umbrella in the sunshine ?

And so the poor, forgotten thing stayed

THE ROUŇD POND

in the dark and dusty cupboard of which Pinker had the key, filled with memories of that all too short walk in the glorious rain.

. . . . . .

Now in all stories, as you know, we have a villain and a hero. To-day, in this story, in the Charing Cross Post Office it happened that a hero and a villain were standing side by side. This makes the plot grow rather exciting, because both the hero and the villain at the same moment caught sight of the Exquisite Umbrella.

But alas ! and alas ! again, the villain was the kind of man who did not mind *whose* umbrella he took, and also he was too quick for the hero (who was an honest man), and, moreover, he saw what an exquisite umbrella this one was, and in a moment his hands were on it, and in another he had left the post office, and was being swallowed up in the great river of human beings that flowed along the Strand.

As you can imagine, our friend, the

umbrella, was highly disgusted and sorrowful. He was afraid he had been caught at last; perhaps he would never see again his own master, and his little blue lady. However, he cheered up when he remembered that his master's name was written upon him beneath his coat, and trusted that soon this would be discovered, and that then the right thing would be done about it.

But this villain was no half-and-half one, but a real, all-round, dark villain, and though he noticed and read the name and address attached to the iron ribs inside, he thought he looked so fine and smart with an umbrella of this description that he kept it for his own, being the kind of man who believes in that old proverb that it is the umbrella that makes the man.

And being a villain, of course he did not lose it easily. It is the nice people that leave umbrellas behind, for they are so often busy being nice that they become forgetful about their own possessions. Also, what do umbrellas matter compared to the dew-drops

balancing themselves on blades of grass at the edges of long white roads that beckon men's feet to walk, or compared to the stars that climb above the hills, or the other interesting and beautiful things that even live in a town? But villains are always greedy that others will steal their prizes, as they themselves would do from another man should they get the chance.

And so the Exquisite Umbrella came to live with strangers away from his own friends.

And what of his twin brother?

Why, a month ago Pinker's fist had closed around some silver money as he had handed it to Mr. Travers, and Mr. Travers had taken it back to his house in triumph for having found it once again, feeling, of course, that he had left it on some occasion at Smaridge's, for as it happened on the very day that Pinker had found it, now he came to think of it, he had dropped in with his friend after the theatre to the lounge to have tea.

And what of the Duke?

He had sent round to Smaridge's, and, in

fact, had also called in himself, to inquire about it, but he could get no information on the subject, though he described it minutely. A brand-new umbrella — used once — gold pencil, etc. (Pinker had no idea that the little gold knob was a real pencil that wrote, so did not connect this description with the Duke's lost treasure.)

The Duke thought of taking to his bed for the week-end, but he did not do so. He became, instead, a slightly embittered man, where umbrellas were concerned, and gave more heart and soul to his Sunshine Homes, trying to forget the past.

He had learned his lesson, and realised that there was really no one in all the world to blame except himself, for having ever allowed such a valuable umbrella to leave the ducal umbrella-stand, simply because the weather had been wet.

. . . . . .

And then about eight months later a marvellous thing happened.

Early on a beautiful spring day, when

A LETTER FOR MR. TRAVERS

the earth smelled of summer coming, Mr. Travers, on arriving down to breakfast, received a Most Mysterious Letter. It was marked "ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE," and somehow looked Important and Interesting.

When he opened it he was rather surprised. It was a half-printed, half-written notice from the Lost Property Office. What did they want with him? Had he dropped anything, or lost his . . . surely it could not be that he had lost his umbrella again? He was getting so good at not losing it nowadays. Was he going downhill again? He could not even remember when he had used it last. Certainly he thought it was standing in the hall. But of course that could *not* be so, because on looking at the notice more closely he saw that it *was* his umbrella that had been found.

Would he call and claim it (On His Majesty's Service)? Of course he would call and claim it. He would be delighted to do so. He was fond of that old umbrella.

It had been a good friend to him. He was grateful to His Majesty. He would go to-day. He was just starting for London, anyway.

CHAPTER 5

WHICH IS A LONG(ISH) CHAPTER

THE EXQUISITE UMBRELLA CATCHES GLIMPSES OF OTHER UMBRELLAS LIVES, TO SAY NOTHING OF THE STORY THAT A CANE TELLS HIM

AN hour or two before this, as dawn spread over London Town, silvering the roof-tops into a fairy city, and breaking with his half-light into a certain building, our old friend the Exquisite Umbrella stirred and looked around him.

At last he had spent a night in the Lost Property Office Hotel for homeless umbrellas (and other belongings of man), and he was pleased. He was nothing if not adventuresome, and this, he felt, was seeing life, or another view of it. He had lain in a little cubicle all to himself surrounded by many other wanderers, and above the head of this particular collection of cubicles was the word

"WEDNESDAY." Next door to him was another collection of cubicles, labelled "THURSDAY," and on the other side was "TUESDAY." He had seen them on his arrival. Each label, he imagined, meant the name of the day on which you had got lost. It had been a Wednesday in his case, on which he had found himself left behind in a bus. As a matter of fact, his present master, the villain of this story, had caught sight of some one (from inside the bus), climbing on to the outside, whom he did not like catching sight of, and he had "run for it," and the conductor of the bus, finding the umbrella master-less, had taken pity on him, and brought him here.

What was going to happen now? How exciting it all was!

He had never seen such a crowd in his life before. A crowd of people he had seen, yes, but to be in a crowd of human beings and in a crowd of fellow-umbrellas is a very different thing indeed. He felt that this was the greatest experience that had ever come to

him. Here he would meet with many characters, interesting and otherwise, that made up the umbrella world.

Presently he began to see one face at a time appear at a little window in a wall in front of the high stool (on which a policeman was now sitting). Each person would tell his, or her, want, and then come round the wall to the inside, and peer about amongst the collection of lost property.

Refined umbrellas were there, and common ones. Some with handles of ducks' heads, or cats' heads ; one with a white carved ivory handle, one whose handle was covered in snake-skin. Some were dressed in silk, and some in rags, and there was even a frilled lace parasol, but none were so exquisite as our friend, and so well turned out. However, each one that was claimed had the same amount of welcome shown it, owner after owner holding out eager hands rather in the way that a mother prefers, and wants, her own child, and we prefer our own doll, or bicycle.

Not only were umbrellas close to him, but canes—those rather aristocratic-in-their-way cousins. Good fellows, and when the chance came, brave-hearted in a fight, although a large part of their lives was holiday time.

One of them was speaking to him now—a rather solid-looking cane, not quite as spruce as most of them there. He was wedged in (yes, "wedged in" was the description) between himself and a most over-dressed, over-painted-looking lady umbrella with an enormous parrot's head for handle, and another umbrella with a broken rib, who had full skirts which were torn, and which once had been black but were faded to green. (She went by the name of "Mrs. Gamp" in the Lost Property Office, and she was never claimed.)

"I hope I shall find my master again," the cane was saying, with the sort of sigh a stick can give, like a little wind passing through willow branches. "He is a good master, and has the same ideals, that is to say, the same views on life, in many ways, as myself. . . ."

"For instance?" The Exquisite Umbrella

was interested. Here was a stick with a soul, in spite of his rather cumbersome-looking body.

"I shall never forget *one* instance, if you would really care to hear it," he answered. "We were walking, my master and I (for, as you know, I am a *walking* stick), down a certain country lane. All around us the trees were waking from spring into summer. The day was glorious, and we almost *sped* along filled with the joy of such a cloudless and perfect day."

"No sign of rain whatsoever?" the umbrella interrupted in a half-anxious voice.

"None at all," answered the cane; "as I said, all was perfection."

"Not *my* idea of a perfect day. Give me at least a few clouds hurrying across the sky's face, with just a *little* hope of rain."

"I can give you no hope whatsoever upon this particular day," the cane continued; "but perhaps you would like to hear the rest of my story?

"Well, as I said, the whole world seemed

joyful. My relations, the trees, sang a little, and swayed to a tiny breeze, and I answered it in my heart, for I, too, once sang in the tree-tops, when suddenly a terrible sound broke upon the peace which made us both stand still for a moment in awe.

" From not very far away, around a bend in the road, there came some cries of an animal in distress. There could be no doubt about this whatsoever, and it sounded like a dog.

" Now, there are two things my master is more fond of than anything else in the world—his walking-stick and his dogs. (He had a " Scotty " and a " Nippy "—nice dogs, whom I very rarely had need of punishing, but on this particular occasion we were staying away from home, where they were.) And also, he could not bear to see any animal in pain. Had this poor creature we were listening to had an accident, we wondered ? What was it ? Its cries seemed to hurt the very sunshine. It was, however, for only just the smallest little second in the world that I and my master stood there hand in hand.

" And then we made a bolt for it.

" I hardly like to tell you what we saw next. A big gipsy-looking man was standing in the middle of the road, and crouching on the ground before him was a little rough dog, who was being kicked by the horrible big feet of this gipsy person.

" I will not describe to you any more of these details, but will only tell you this, that in a flash I knew my hour had come.

" There was only a yard or two between us and this brutal man, and these, as you may imagine, we soon covered.

" The next moment I was giving him, I expect, the greatest thrashing that he had ever had in his life. Some strength which had been sleeping seemed to awake in me, and what with that, and the power of my master's arm combined, the man was soon on his knees grovelling for mercy.

" ' He took my dinner, he did. He took my dinner,' was all he could stammer.

" ' And if that is all you think of your friend, I will take *him*,' said my master. And

stooping down he picked up the little shaggy dog and gathered him in his arms. And then together we went down the road, while the sun, which had seemed to disappear for a little time, shone out again. The small dog licked my master's hands, and looked up at him out of his rough face with round dark eyes that kept saying, ' Thank you.' "

" That is a beautiful story," said the Exquisite Umbrella, moved almost to tears. " If it had not been for your tactless allusions to sunshine, I should have thought even more of it ; but tell me, was not the shaggy dog afraid of you at all ? I should have thought . . ."

" Ah, he was at first, but he is all right now he sees I am a friend to him. In fact, he has developed into the kind of dog who is always busy, *very* important, and who commands one to go for walks. . . ."

A dainty black silk umbrella, who had been a constant companion for some years to an old lady, was silently crying, and the painted parrot lady umbrella was sobbing loudly.

Later in the day when the little maid, who had left the parrot one at the Moving Pictures, had come to claim her, the cane remarked to his new umbrella acquaintance, "What a pity she dresses like that—such bright silk, so gaudy. But they often have kind hearts, these eccentric people."

"I did not know there were such umbrellas in the world until I came here," answered the Exquisite Umbrella.

"I can see you have lived amongst one set only most of your life. One wants to travel a bit like this to get a broad-minded point of view."

"Yes, I have learned that already, for . . ."

But the Exquisite Umbrella did not finish his sentence.

A tall man had suddenly come from behind the barrier, and was advancing towards them. In front of him, with the walk of a managing director, went a small, shaggy dog. Out of his hairy face looked two round, dark, trusting eyes.

Suddenly the man, after gazing into the

THE GIPSY AND THE LITTLE ROUGH DOG

Wednesday cubicle, drew out our cane friend, and, with a smile breaking over his face, gripped him firmly by the hand as one greets an old friend.

"I am glad you are found again," the Exquisite Umbrella managed to say just before the cane left.

"I wish you the same luck," said the walking-stick. "Good-day."

And, "Come on, old chap," said the tall man, though whether he was talking to the stick, or to the dog, the umbrella could not quite make out, but as they all left, he saw the cane stroke itself gently over the little dog's back. "Come along," the shaggy little animal seemed to say; "I have some business on hand which is most important."

And together the three friends vanished into the distance, and out of the Exquisite Umbrella's life.

CHAPTER 6

THE PLOT DOES THICKEN

AFTER the cane's story was done, and he had gone, the hero of our tale began to feel quite lonely in spite of the crowd he was in, and to wonder if he was ever going to be found again, and if so, when his turn was coming. Ah, when ? He felt he would rather be back with his false master than laid upon any shelf.

And then—suddenly a face he knew was at the little window, and a familiar voice was speaking to the policeman.

" Certainly, sir ; come inside and take a look round. Left in a bus. . . . Wednesday, did you say ? Here are the Wednesdays."

So he had been traced! And in about two seconds had been recognised.

"This is mine," said the villain, drawing out the shining umbrella and stroking its silky coat with affection.

"Certainly, sir, but just one moment. Your name, sir?"

The villain hesitated, but only for a second.

"Travers," he answered—"E. G. Travers."

"That is quite right, sir. That is the name inside the umbrella. Kindly sign here, sir. There will be a small fee to pay."

And so, to the great indignation of the rediscovered umbrella, the villain added the sin of forgery to his other records, and signed the name "E. G. Travers"; and then once more the umbrella, half-relieved at going out once more into the world, but angry that this man should have used his dear and real master's name, felt himself tucked under the villain's arm, who, delighted at his success, started off with him down the stairs which led into the street.

They had not gone half-way down before the umbrella saw a most amazing sight.

Coming up the steps towards them was his dearly-loved first master, the real E. G. Travers.

How he longed at that moment for the power of human speech, or to be able to make some sort of sign to him. What could he do ? Oh ! what could he do ? In another minute he would be lost to him again, and this time probably for ever.

But Mr. Travers suddenly stopped, and very politely addressing the escaping man, asked him a question.

" Excuse me," he said, " but I cannot help being interested in your umbrella. It is the exact image of one I have come to look for here, and it is not a common type. You must pardon me, but I thought just possibly there had been some mistake."

And then the villain at that moment made the stupidest blunder of his life. He lost his temper, and asked Mr. Travers what he meant by offering him such an insult as to suppose that he had been taking anything that did

not belong to him, which made Mr. Travers immediately grow suspicious. Why should this man be angry if he had *not* stolen the umbrella, as it would be such a simple thing to prove? So Mr. Travers asked him if he would kindly just step upstairs to settle beyond doubt or dispute whether the umbrella was really his, or not.

When this request was refused, Mr. Travers was Nearly Certain, and when the villain started down the steps again quickly, trying to push past him in his eagerness to get away, Mr. Travers was Quite Sure, and barred his way.

"I will give you in charge. You insult me." The villain's voice was raised, as Mr. Travers meant it to be, and as he himself was a tall man, and strong (while the other was just the opposite to this), he continued to bar the way until, the voice becoming louder still, the attention of a policeman standing on the lower step outside the door was roused, which Mr. Travers also meant should happen.

And then in a flash the umbrella knew now

that his rightful master would win the day, for the policeman from downstairs had arrived on the scene, and was already ordering the two men to proceed upstairs to the Lost Property Office again, so that there their differences might be settled.

Then the villain once more lost his head. The umbrella felt himself dropped with a sudden bang to the ground, and he heard a sound of heavy feet going for their very life down the stone steps.

But the policeman was the healthier and the stronger of the two, and before the fleeing man had gone round the next corner, the policeman had him by the collar, and in another minute was marching him down the road, and very fast out of this story. All there is left to tell you about him is that that night he did not sleep in his own bed. He had been wanted for other things for a long time by Scotland Yard.

And that is how the policeman who stood on the bottom step of the Lost Property Office got promotion.

AT THE LOST PROPERTY OFFICE

Meantime the Exquisite Umbrella, with a great joy running through his whole frame, was borne by his rightful master (who had presented one of his visiting cards, and had proved in other ways as well, to the satisfaction of the Lost Property Office, that he was the real E. G. Travers) back through London down to the country to relate his adventures to his little blue friend, who, as he felt quite sure, would be quietly waiting for him.

But still his adventures were not quite at an end, for when he arrived at his old country home, a more astonishing thing than all the others happened.

Mr. Travers entered the hall still holding him in his hand, and related his exciting story to his mother ; and then she said a very, very strange thing :

" But, darling, your umbrella is in its place. I saw it only just now."

" That's impossible, Mother," her son answered. " You must have been dreaming. Here it is. See here is my name inside."

And sure enough there it was—"E. G. Travers," and the address.

And so to solve the mystery, together to the umbrella-stand went Mrs. Travers and her son.

The Exquisite Umbrella, who is old now and has retired from active life, still loves to tell what happened next.

He hung there in his master's hand close to the stand and saw with joy his little lady, who had on a new gown (still blue), but what was so astonishing was that standing up by her side he also saw—his twin brother !

Mr. Travers gave a gasp. It was true. His umbrella was there, and yet it was also in his hand ! But that could not be. One must belong to some one else. Who could it be ? How had it got there ? Or was he going out of his mind ? What was this mystery ?

CHAPTER 7

THE PLOT THINS DOWN

THE Duke of Bing Bong was puzzled.

The man sitting opposite to him in a first-class carriage of a train bound for Scotland did not look a thief. He appeared to be a most respectable member of society. In fact, the Duke rather liked his face with that lazy, amused look in blue, honest eyes. What, then, if he were indeed an honest man, was he doing with that umbrella above him on the rack? Had he taken it by mistake from Smaridge's upon that fateful day? No. No one takes that sort of umbrella by mistake, anyway without discovering what he has done. Could it be that there were two umbrellas in

THE TWIN UMBRELLAS MEET AGAIN

the world just exactly alike, specially of SUCH a pattern ?

Of course it might *just* be possible, but there was a look about this one. . . . However, it probably did, by a strange chance, happen to belong legally to this young man. The Duke disliked suspecting people . . . although . . . nevertheless. The Duke's heart gave a little pit-pat each time he looked up at the rack.

And then suddenly the young man opposite took out a pocket-book, laid it on the seat beside him, and began feeling in each of his pockets. Having done this he did it all over again.

Evidently he was looking for something which could not be found.

" Matches ? " said the Duke, handing a little gold flat box across the carriage.

" No, thanks, sir. I am really looking for a pencil to jot down something before I forget it. Most aggravating. Was sure I had one . . ."

The Duke felt in his own pockets, and

found one—his fingers closed upon it, but—he did not produce it. No. He stopped just exactly in the nick of time, whatever the nick of time may be; anyway, whatever it is the Duke stopped in it.

A marvellous inspiration had suddenly blazed its way across his brain.

"What about"—he looked straight into the eyes of the young man opposite to see if he should flinch or start—"what about," he asked, "your umbrella?"

For a moment an awful thought came into the young man's mind. Was he travelling with a lunatic? For surely no one but a madman should suggest that he take down notes with his umbrella.

Wildly Mr. Travers (for you will have guessed by this time who the young man was) looked about for the communication cord in case he should need to pull it to stop the train, if the man with the bent nose opposite (who looked more like a Duke than anything else, Mr. Travers thought, though most likely he made dog-collars or

was called Mr. Jones) should become really raving.

"I mean," said the bent nose, "does not the handle contain a pencil?"

"Why, of course, what a magnificent idea!" Mr. Travers breathed two sighs of relief—one for having discovered his friend opposite was not a madman, the other because a pencil had been found.

He rose from his seat, and the umbrella felt himself lifted down from the rack, and the pencil being removed from its little case.

"Do you know, sir, that I have never used that pencil—never once . . ."

"Perhaps you have not had the umbrella long?" The Duke had such a note of anxiety in his voice that Mr. Travers stared swiftly at him. "About a year, let us say?"

"For years—off and on, that is, of course," Mr. Travers answered. "I hardly remember how many. I have had it re-covered once or twice, but the frame is still like new. But

now I come to think of it, how did you know there *was* a pencil in it? You could hardly have seen the umbrella properly up there in the rack."

"I had one just like it once," the Duke answered. "In fact, would you be so kind as to allow me to hold that pencil in my hand for a moment?"

Mr. Travers passed it over.

Suddenly the Duke gave a loud exclamation. "Sir," he announced, regarding the young man sternly, "*this is my umbrella!* See those engraved words on the pencil. That is my name. I had quite forgotten, until a couple of minutes ago, I had had them put there. See! Read for yourself."

"But *my* name is inside. It was put there by the shop people where it was bought."

"Read my name on the pencil first, young man—there—'Bing Bong'—there."

"Bing Bong? Why, I remember seeing that once when I examined it. I thought it was the name of the make of the pencil, after

the town of Bing Bong, where I thought they were probably manufactured. Then you are, I suppose, the Duke of Bing Bong ? "

" I am, sir."

" But . . . but . . ." Mr. Travers opened the umbrella, and then gradually a light began to shine on the problem. His name was not inside. His own was the one in the hall at home; for a moment he had forgotten that one. Somehow, once upon a time this umbrella had come by mistake into his possession. He had, of course, always known that one of the two umbrellas did not belong to him, but as for thinking he would ever find the owner . . .

With a graceful apology, and the whole explanation, Mr. Travers handed the Duke his umbrella.

" I will lend you the pencil, young man," said the Duke of Bing Bong, " to make your jottings."

. . . . . .

Away down in the country, our friend the Exquisite Umbrella, twin brother to the Super-

Super Umbrella, stood side by side with his small blue lady.

"I am glad he did not take me to Scotland," he whispered to her.

"Not so glad as I am," she whispered back.

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TWIN UMBRELLAS

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